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ABSTRACT

This document contains four papers from a symposium on professionalizing the field of human resource development (HRD). "Issues in the Professionalization of HRD: Building a Knowledge Base and Credentialing Practitioners" (Robert W. Rowden) discusses indicators of an emerging field as workplace education becomes a major strategic thrust. "Professionalization Comes from Theory and Research: The 'Why' Instead of the 'How-To'" (Neal E. Chalofsky) argues that, without reliable theory and research, HRD can never become a viable discipline with a solid knowledge base. In "Professionalization and Reflective Theory Building in HRD" (Vivian W. Mott), reflective theory building is identified as a way to identify the source of HRD knowledge and the means of knowledge production. "Credentialing in the Workplace: Human Resource Development Practitioners Should Strive for Certification" identifies workplace trends influencing certification and makes the case in favor of it. (KC)

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26 **Professionalizing the Field**

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Issues in the Professionalization of HRD: Building a Knowledge Base and Credentialing Practitioners

Robert W. Rowden, Mercer University

Professionalization Comes From Theory and Research: The "Why" Instead of the "How-To"

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Professionalization and Reflective Theory Building in HRD

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Credentialing in the Workplace: Human Resource Development Practitioners Should Strive for Certification

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ACADEMY OF
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

1998 Conference Proceedings

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Issues in The Professionalization of HRD: Building a Knowledge Base and Credentialing Practitioners

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A number of issues indicative of an emerging field have become evident as the education of adults in the workplace becomes a major strategic thrust in many organizations.

Sustainable competitive advantage has proven elusive for companies in the 1990s. While making enormous investments in technology, research, and state-of-the-art marketing, many of today_s companies continue to ignore the single most important factor in achieving and maintaining competitive success: people. Companies with a highly committed workforce repeatedly out distance their rivals in both profits and returns.

People and their learning are becoming more important because many other sources of competitive success are less powerful than they once were. Recognizing that the basis of competitive advantage has changed is essential to developing a different frame of reference for management and for corporate strategy. Traditional sources of success--product and process technology, protected or regulated markets, access to financial resources, and economies of scale--can still provide competitive leverage, but to a lesser degree now than in the past, leaving organizational culture and capabilities, derived from people and workplace learning, as comparatively more vital.

If competitive success is achieved through people, then the skills of those people are critical. Consequently, one of the most obvious implications of the changing basis of competitive success is the growing importance of having a workforce with adequate skills. Between 1929 and 1982, education prior to work accounted for 26% of the growth in the productive capacity of the United States, with learning on the job contributing to an additional 55% (Carnevale & Goldstein, 1990). Carnevale and Goldstein go on to say that "learning in school and learning on the job are by far the most important factors behind American economic growth and productivity in this century, and will determine the nation's economic prospects in the next "(p. 30).

The influence of overseas competition, new technology, and the changing nature of American employees has made the effective training and retraining of American workers more critical than ever before. The scope of this effort is staggering. Employers spend over $50 billion per year on formal employee training and education. Approximately $180 billion per year is spent on informal, on-the-job training. One in eight worker receive formal employer-sponsored job training each year. This represents an estimated 1.6 billion hours of training for 49 million people (Carnevale & Schultz,1990; Training Industry Report, 1997). In-house human resource development (HRD) departments offer more instruction per employee than such alternative sources as external vendors, educational institutions, labor unions, or trade and professional associations. Without question, the workplace seems to be the catalyst that is changing the nature of adult education (The Future of Workplace Learning and Performance, 1994).

The importance of all this activity cannot be overestimated. A literate, educated, inquisitive, problem-solving workforce is essential to the survival and competitiveness of business and industry. A labor force that has "learned how to learn" and continues doing so can give a company a powerful edge. Organizations are discovering and using knowledge of adult learning to upgrade the capacity of their employees to make new contributions to the success of the company.

Throughout our lives learning experiences are an important source of personal stimulation. Workplace learning represents a positive hope, both for persons first entering the world of work and for individuals changing their work environments. Employees must learn to anticipate rapid change in their jobs, careers, work groups, and organizations. Farsightedness is learned. Human resource development can contribute to this learning by basing organized

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training, education, and development on expected future needs when appropriate to do so. Before workplace learning can help propel organizations into the next century, those engaged in aiding the process must refine and define the nature of their work.

That process of refining and defining the field is what this symposium will attempt to do as it explores some of the issues associated with aiding adults to learn in the workplace. Looking across all the issues, some generalizations about the state of the art of workplace learning can be made. Those generalizations are: 1). that the field is trying to forge an identity for itself; 2). what type of knowledge, empirically based or practice based, should inform the field, and 3). practitioners of workplace learning are concerned with professionalization of the field.

Development of the Field Devoted to Learning in the Workplace

Its not easy to define a field of study. It seems that, generally, those in the field of adult education claim HRD as part of adult education; while those in HRD, generally, attempt to distance themselves from adult education, human resource management (HRM), organizational psychology, and other fields that would lay claim to HRD's purview. Other elements such as the development of a knowledge base and professionalization, go into framing the field's boundaries. The development of a knowledge base and professionalization in particular, are being examined today for their role in establishing a field devoted to educating adults in the workplace.

With regard to the knowledge base there seems to be a wide range of opinion as to what type of knowledge should inform the field. Many see HRD as a function populated by practitioners (Rothwell & Sredl, 1992; Goldstein, 1993) and feel that knowing comes from doing. Still others (Campbell, 1989; Latham, 1994) believe that if the profession is ever to be recognized as a legitimate field of inquiry, the knowledge base must be empirically formed.

Those that feel that knowledge comes from practice believe that if one wants to know the best way to do something, one should ask a person who does it. A reflective practitioner is problem-solving oriented and develops "theories in use" (Schon, 1983). Those in their "ivory towers" don't really know what goes on "down in the trenches." The only way to ensure a field has a solid foundation is to anchor it with a practitioner's ways of knowing.

The advocates of a more empirically-based field believe that knowledge is formed from research. Without a reliable theory and research base, a function can never become a valid field of study and will forever remain a collection of "old wives tales" and speculation. Using all forms of research, both qualitative and quantitative, ensures that a field of study will have a solid foundation. There seems to be little middle ground between the two camps.

There also appears to be little middle ground on another issue related to educating adults in the workplace, licensing or credentialing. There is a contingency that would strongly support requiring that all engaged in workplace learning must first be certified by a board impaneled for that purpose or otherwise credentialed (Carlson, 1977; Cervero, 1987; White, 1992). There is an equally strong voice that contends that since the ranks of those engaged in educating adults in the workplace are primarily made up of practitioners and that the field is still relatively immature, no effort should be made to license or credential those involved (Friedson, 1986; James, 1992).

Those who support the call for some sort of certification of HRD people do so out of the belief that it leads to being perceived as "professionals," and that society expects professionalism from all practitioners. They contend that in a society where physicians, lawyers, and even plumbers must be certified to practice their trades, educators of adults in the workplace can not attain the same level of recognition from society until a systematic procedure is in place to ensure a certain level of competence. They also see professional certification as a mechanism for providing standards by which those in HRD can address questions such as who they are, what they are, and what level of proficiency one must attain in order to aid in workplace learning.

On the other hand, the job of educating adults in the workplace is so diverse and changing, it could be difficult to develop and implement standards of certification. Gilley and Galbraith (1987) have identified three components of professionalization as (1) level of knowledge and competence enhancement, (2) level of importance of occupation to society, and

(3) level of control by members of the occupation. Anyone familiar with workplace learning can readily see that the field is nowhere near being a profession based on these criteria. In addition, the issue of accessibility or exclusion must be addressed. If only certified professionals were permitted to engage in educating adults in the workplace, then it is possible, for example, that a supervisor who wanted to conduct a safety training class for a group of co-workers would not be permitted to do so just as a law clerk is not allowed to represent a client in a court of law. Such a situation would place workplace learning in the hands of professionals--alone. That could mean that "non-professionals" would be barred from sharing their expertise with co-workers, even on an informal or incidental level.

Future Issues

Where does HRD go from here? What is on the horizon? No one can know for sure what the future holds. Some things we do know are already beginning to emerge. Diversity training is gaining a lot of attention lately. As the nature of the workforce in the United States continues to change, those charged with aiding learning in the workplace are being asked to accomplish what society has struggled with for many years. Will we have any more success than society has as a whole? We know that even with a degree of success it will not be the last hurdle to cross before the field is defined--we are already beginning to talk about globalization of the workplace.

How will the development and education of workers fit into a global economy? As other cultures establish business concerns in the United States, will they adapt to our concept of workplace learning, or will we adapt to theirs--or are they the same thing? How will the introduction of other values change our perception of the value of learning? Or, as U.S. companies spread out globally, will we carry our ideals to other cultures, and perhaps, some might say, pollute them? Just what effect will the mingling and merging of multiple cultures have on those who facilitate workplace learning?

Finally, what may become one of the most critical issues to face educators of adults in the workplace is one of social consciousness. Authors such as Kincheloe (1995) and Korten (1996) contend that workplace learning should include an explicit focus on the social and ethical issues of work. They call for the education and training of "smart workers" who are skilled in communication, problem-solving, acquiring and using information, and developing the capacity to be life-long learners, but not devoid of intellectual subject matter, especially knowledge that addresses the past traditions and contemporary movements of workers rights. Kincheloe calls for problem-centered training that addresses various themes including, "the environment, the quest for justice, the fragility of democracy, poverty, and economic development, the quest for peace, problems of technology, transportation, hunger and nutrition, urban decay, and violence" (p. 286). They feel that these issues of democracy and the corporation's place in it have been quickly forgotten in the scramble to compete globally.

Will this be the new challenge for educators of adults in the workplace? Just as the workplace has been called upon to correct the deficiencies of the public education system in literacy and numeracy education, will it be called upon to correct deficiencies in social consciousness? How will corporate stakeholders respond? Even if this concept catches hold in the U.S., how will it play out in global workplaces--would non-democratic host countries even allow the introduction of such ideas to a local workforce? Are the current educators of adults in the workplace equipped for this type of an undertaking? It will be interesting to watch the answers to these questions unfold.

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Professionalization Comes From Theory and Research: The "Why" Instead of the "How-To"

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This paper presents the argument that without reliable theory development and research, HRD can never become a viable discipline with a solid knowledge base. We can learn from practice, but we will not grow and be recognized without research guiding the evolution of the field.

Like most other new professions, the first trainers did not see themselves as pioneers in a new field, but as professionals in other fields who had a job to help adults learn a specific skill (Nadler, 1990). HRD was not even seen as a significant activity until World War II. (Although the oldest training association, the Training Officers Conference, was started by Federal government training officers in 1938.) During this time, the armed forces and the industrial establishment were desperate for competent personnel. It was discovered that vast numbers of the adult population were capable of being trained and made productive in relatively short periods of time. Since that time, the overwhelmingly major focus of the field has been to provide services through the development and delivery of training programs.

The basis for developing these programs has been a mixture of guesswork, trial-and-error, and the borrowing of theory and research results from other disciplines. And, I believe the trial-and-error approach was usually chosen over a study of theory and research. The only theory we tried to adhere to was Knowles' adult learning theory. It is a relatively recent phenomenon that we have been examining what is considered best practice in the field; and this approach still begs the question of whether what may work in one context will work equally well in another context. This is not to say that there are no practitioners who have tried to develop programs and interventions based on theoretical constructs and/or solid research findings. But, as a percentage of the total practitioner pool, I would believe they are an infinitesimal number.

Is HRD, like adult education, a theoretical or practical field of knowledge. I do not think that there is any question that, up until recently, it has been a practical and applied discipline. "Its (adult education's, like HRD's) primary objective is coping effectively with some unsatisfactory state of affairs or problem of everyday life" (Jensen, 1964, p.106). Jacobs (Spring, 1990) echoed this theme when he stated that;

> . . . HRD is both an area of professional practice and an emerging interdisciplinary body of academic knowledge. The interrelatedness of these two aspects makes HRD similar to most other applied professions, most of which have emerged to meet some important social or organizational need. After the practice is established, the need arises to formalize the knowledge gained in practice into some logical structure. Such activity helps legitimize the profession and increases the reliability of practice (p.66).

This structuring began in 1967 with the publication of an article by Nadler and Lippitt; and in 1976 (Bureau of Training) with the first national research study devoted to identifying the roles and competencies of HRD specialists (from one sector; the Federal Government). The structuring ended with the most recent role and competency study conducted by the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD) (McLagen, 1989).

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HRD's current body of knowledge

Every new occupation seeking professional status has sought to delineate its foundation in terms of its unique body of knowledge. (Jarvis, 1987). HRD, again like adult education, has developed a unique body of knowledge suited to its purposes though two methods;

- Experiences gained from coping with problems of practice lead to the formulation of principles or generalizations which provides guides for future practice.
- Knowledge which has been developed by other disciplines is borrowed and reformulated for use in the field (Jensen, 1964).

The current body of knowledge is still represented by the ASTD study mentioned earlier. The results of this study represent both practice and borrowed theory and knowledge, which is sometimes hard to distinguish because of the mingling of the two over the years. It is important to note that the data collection technique used to arrive at the results was to poll approximately 300 "experts" (as identified by a committee of practitioners and academics) as to what they perceived to be the critical roles and competencies for the HRD field in five years (from the time of the study). This may be a legitimate form of inquiry for a field in its infancy, but it does not translate into a full-fledged body of knowledge for a professional discipline. There have been little, if any, research to test the experts' perceptions; few attempts to develop theoretical constructs from the data; and almost no scholarly critique and debate of the value of the study beyond its immediate applications (except for the Academic Guide to the Models for HRD Practice).

Is this role and competency model really enough to provide a foundation, or core, for the discipline to build from as it matures as a profession? If the core is the area where the discipline's own theory and practice will emerge, it should contain:

Philosophy and mission The essence of why this field exists as a profession; its purpose, values, and ethics that provide the foundation for the professional practice of the field. The notions of helping adults learn in work settings and optimizing human and organizational growth are philosophically-laden terms that represent a value towards the development of human potential.

As part of a strategic planning effort, ASTD (October, 1989) developed statements on their mission and values:

Our mission-we provide leadership to individuals, organizations, and society to achieve work-related competence, performance, and fulfillment through workplace learning.

Our values-we value the dignity, and the potential of the individual in the workplace. We celebrate diversity among people and value difference as a source of creativity. We believe that developing people's potential is critical to organizational effectiveness but that people themselves are ultimately responsible for their own growth and change. We believe that organizations, including our own, must provide individuals with the opportunity to develop. We believe that collaboration is essential for the actualization of our beliefs.

While this is a significant step in helping the field become aware of the need for a philosophical base, it was actually developed as part of an internal association strategic planning process, not as a statement for the profession.

McKenzie (in Stuckey and Berardinelli, 1990) suggests that the philosophical orientations of adult educators are rooted in professional practice and derive more from concrete experiences in organizational settings than from logical analysis of the evaluation of abstract philosophical arguments. He also found that business and industry trainers had more progressive and behaviorist orientations than other educators of adults. But Stucky and Berardinelli could not find one "cohesively written philosophical statement" in the literature (p.1). Mech (1984) noted in one of her dissertation findings that we need to have a philosophy because it gives form to function and provides the foundation for theoretical model building.

Theory & concepts The intellectual underpinnings of the profession. If the philosophy represents the "heart" of the field, the theory represents the "brain". This is the *basic* knowledge needed to function as professionals. Jacobs (Spring, 1990) cites education, systems theory, economics, psychology, and organizational behavior as the five major disciplines that have most influenced the field, although he admits his list is by no means exhaustive. Other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and management science have been mentioned as contributing to the theory base

(Chalofsky & Lincoln, 1983). While there seems to be general agreement that we work from an interdisciplinary body of theory, there is no agreement as to what part should be considered as essential for HRD professionals. The two knowledge areas that were considered core knowledges in the Models for HRD Practice (McLagan, 1989) were adult learning and organization behavior. I believe we have reached a significant milestone with the research and theory building being conducted on the learning organization and on group & organizational learning. This work represents the first research and theory emerging directly from our own discipline. But, whether the theory is generated from within the field or borrowed from other disciplines, we need to continue to build the theoretical foundation for the field.

Roles & competencies The heart and brain need the "body" in order to implement the ideas they generate. The profession needs a core set of skills and abilities in order to put the theories and concepts into practice. The most recent study, Models for HRD Practice, actually identified fewer roles than the previous study, Models for Excellence (McLagan, 1983), even though the scope of the study was broadened. And those 11 roles could be further organized into the four roles (learning specialist, manager, consultant, and career development specialist) that have been in the literature since 1975 (Chalofsky, 1989). We also know which competencies could be considered core to the field by identifying those that are the most often required for performance of the roles. We have compiled enough research data to provide for the day-to-day practice of the field at present.

But abstract sets of performance are not enough to guide *professional* practice. Consider Lewin's well-known formula: behavior is a function of the interaction between performance and the environment (Watkins & Willis, 1991). We may know what needs to be performed, but we know little of the social context (the organizational environment) where the performance will operate nor the psychological context (the individual inner environment) of the learner. We need to develop the theory and conduct the research that will translate the results of this study into truly professional practice.

Why HRD's present "body of knowledge" has failed to professionalize the field

We know what roles we should perform and we are continually scanning the field for best practice, but we have yet to reach the level of a mature profession for the following reasons:

What we practice is based on guesswork, not on theories tested by research Most of what is practiced in the field is still, at best, educated trial and error, and, at least, "the fad of the month". Few organizations or HRD consulting firms conduct research to test new approaches. And the academic research being conducted is still too new to stand the test of being translated into practice.

What we practice is based at least ten years (at least) behind the state of the art, in terms of both research and thinking The state of new emerging research and theory building is approximately five years ahead of the state of the profession; what is considered best practice in the field. The state of the profession is approximately five years ahead of the state of practice; what usually goes on in organizations on a day-to-day basis. This is true of most professions; physicians prescribe treatments they are used to until a new one is brought to their attention by various professional sources. And they read their journals and go to conferences to keep up with the latest research. They are aware that each level pushes the one below it and it is their professionally ethical responsibility to be aware of what is going on at each level to give their patients the best service possible.

In HRD, the state of research and theory building did not have outlets for dissemination until several years ago with the establishment of the *Human Resource Development Quarterly* and the *Performance Improvement Quarterly* journals. In addition, an association for HRD academics (the HRD Professors Network of ASTD) was established in 1981 but did not seriously begin to promote scholarly work until the Academy for Human Resource Development was formed in 1993. Thus, HRD has not had the state of research and theory building guiding and informing best practice; which ,in turn, would be guiding and informing day-to-day practice. Instead, we have had people's opinions and ideas cloaked as new theories and/or approaches driving practice.

What we practice is based on what the client wants, rather than on what works As a helping profession, we are unique. We are not guided by a professional set of standards. we are not expected

to adhere to an enforceable code of conduct, and we are not committed to a philosophically-based professional mission or set of professional values. We are a context and situation-based field. Some would say this is beneficial, because it allows us to be flexible to deliver the services needed by our clients. I would argue that it leaves us open to deliver the services and interventions our clients *want*, but not necessarily need. We may know what the client needs and what interventions will work, but what ultimately gets delivered is what "sells". This may sound cynical until you read the conference brochures that represent the current state of practice and that are attended by HRD specialists who then go back to their organizations with the latest "how-to's" that just happen to coincide with the latest books top management is reading. And then a year later read in Fortune or The Wall Street Journal about the failure of the latest management approach to lead to organizational effectiveness.

The only way we will be able to transition from this stage is to be able to present interventions to our clients that have been developed from theory and research. We also, of cause, need to convince our clients there are no "magic" answers to organizational effectiveness.

There is nothing more practical than a good theory

While the field needs to generate and/or adapt theory, as well as conduct more research, we also need to heed Lewin's words in ensuring that theory and research gets translated into practice. Yet theory building and research is a relatively new and somewhat maligned activity outside of the HRD academic setting (Chalofsky & Reinhart, 1988). Practitioners do not have the time or incentive to read research-based articles, organizational HRD functions do not consider many of their data-gathering and inquiry-based studies as research, and many organizations will not share their research for proprietary reasons. In addition, practitioners do not have any incentive to publish research and academics do have incentive to publish, but only in scholarly journals that are only read by other academics. Actually, the state of HRD research is at a point now where adult education research was approximately 15 years ago when Kidd (1981) listed a number of other criticisms in a discussion of adult education research needs. He stated that too often research arises out of the needs and interests of the researcher rather than the needs of the field; we pay little attention to research from other countries; we look at problems in settings that are not easily generalizable; and our writing about research " is as stylized as an airline timetable, and only half as exciting" (p. 57).

The research being conducted needs to inform practice, the research findings needs to get into the hands of the practitioners, and the practitioners need to be willing to apply the research findings in and with their client organizations. Merriam (1986) makes several suggestions to facilitate the research-to-practice transition. One is to find people who act as links between researchers and practitioners; in our field they could be the consultants and practitioners who are also graduate students. They need to read and conduct research for their studies and can help to translate and apply research findings. The Academy for HRD has instituted a special group of consisting of practitioners who are interested in research and has invited them to give feedback to the Academy on research needs and to support the dissemination of research. Another suggestion is more collaborative arrangements between researchers and practitioners. It has long been the practice of consultants and their clients to make joint presentations at conferences, the same could be encouraged for researchers and their clients.
Especially where the relationship to practice is built into the research design, such as action research, case study research, and other forms of qualitative research. Making research results easily understood would help the transition. ASTD's Training & Development has a section that is included quarterly called "research capsules" and the Academy of Management's Executive has a section called "research translations". Both summarize research studies and gear the writing for practitioners.

Conclusion

There are now over 200 academic programs in HRD and related fields. The research emanating from these programs have begun to have an impact on the field. In addition, the number of graduates in managerial and consulting positions must also be growing, given the number of graduates from all

these programs. This will, in turn, result in HRD professionals who appreciate research. Our professional credibility will begin to be based on a theoretically sound body of knowledge that will give us the ability to give our clients what they truly need. Professional credibility based on theoretically-based practice will give us the ability to be valued and trusted as *authentic* agents of organization change and effectiveness.

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Professionalization and Reflective Theory Building in HRD

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Human resource development professionals agree that a sound knowledge base is a critical aspect of any developing field of practice. The source of that knowledge and the means of knowledge production, however, are frequently points of contention. Reflective theory building is one way that practitioners can contribute to the professionalization and knowledge base of HRD.

One of the five critical questions debated in a recent issue of *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, (Rowden, 1996) focuses on the role of theory in human resource development (HRD), specifically the source of knowledge in a field striving to professionalize. Chalofsky (1996) argues that "professionalization comes from theory" (p.51), and further stresses that "without a solid theory and research base the discipline will never become a valid field of study" (p.51). Mott, on the other hand, does not question the need of a solid theoretical base, but maintains that "expert knowledge must be generated by those ... who have a vested interest in the process and product. Those persons are reflective practitioners rightly engaged in reflective theory building" (1996, p.62). The purposes herein are to further explore the role and source of knowledge in the continued professionalization of HRD through a review of Chalofsky and Mott's work, and to examine reflective theory building in professional practice. The paper concludes with suggestions for facilitating knowledge production by reflective practitioners, thereby promoting the professional growth of HRD.

Professionalization and the Role of Knowledge in HRD

While the development of a distinct knowledge base is one criteria for the recognition of a profession, the issue of professionalization is a complex concern, especially in a field that is home to both practitioners and scholars. In the above mentioned text regarding theory and the professionalization of HRD, Chalofsky and Mott's (1996) contributions deal with the issue of the source and means of knowledge production in the profession. Theirs is not, however, a polar argument.

Chalofsky: Professionalization Depends on Theory. Chalofsky (1996) begins his chapter with a bit of history regarding the formation of HRD as a practical and applied field. In particular, he cites the lack of distinct theoretical constructs to guide the practices of the profession. He identifies HRD's unique body of knowledge as a (a) combination of informal but expert knowledge held by those practicing in the field and (b) knowledge from other disciplines which is borrowed and reformulated as needed by HRD practitioners. Chalofsky argues that this is appropriate and sufficient for an interdisciplinary and developing "field in its infancy, but it does not translate into a full-fledged body of knowledge for a professional discipline" (p.52). He adds that two "legitimate" studies have been conducted into the roles and competencies needed in HRD, but suggests that these alone fail to provide a core for the profession as it matures.

This core, Chalofsky (1996) maintains, should consist of three elements: philosophy and mission; theories and concepts; and roles and competencies. First, the field's philosophy and mission, should provide the foundation, rationale, and ethics for practice in the profession. In this brief paragraph, no mention is made regarding whether the field of HRD has considered any particular philosophical stance or formulated a mission statement. Indeed, later in the chapter, Chalofsky states that the "field is not ... committed to a philosophically based professional mission or set of professional values" (p.54). Second, theoretical constructs should guide those practicing in the field. In HRD, numerous disciplines contribute to the theories and concepts borrowed for

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use in the field: anthropology, economics, education, management and organization science, psychology, and sociology. Third, roles and competencies would outline the skills needed to practice in the field. Chalofsky briefly introduces the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) studies conducted by McLagan (1983, 1989), and another by Dixon and Henkelman (1991) which organized the roles and competencies needed in the field. Chalofsky cautions his readers that while "enough research data has (sic) been complied to provide for day-to-day practice at present ... abstract sets of competencies are not enough to guide professional practice" (p.53).

Chalofsky (1996) next addresses the reasons that the field of HRD has failed to professionalize. Without consideration of the distinct and complex elements of professionalization offered elsewhere (See for example, Cervero, 1991, or Gilley and Galbraith, 1987), Chalofsky maintains that HRD has failed in professionalization efforts because (1) practice is based largely on guesswork rather than theory, (2) lags five to ten years behind available research, and (3) focuses on the whims of "what the clients want but do not necessarily need" (p.54). Unfortunately, based on Chalofsky's statements that "what is practiced in the field is still, at best, educated trial and error and is often the fad of the month," that the "field is not guided by a professional set of standards," and that "what ultimately get delivered is what sells" (p.54), readers are perhaps justifiably left to conclude that the professional failing of the field is one of ethics and not research.

In his final argument concerning the value and practicality of "good" theory, Chalofsky (1996) offers several reasons why theory and research are resisted in HRD, all the while maintaining the need for rigorous and relevant research which can be applied in practice. He cites practitioners' lack of time and incentive to publish or even read research, poor understanding and conceptualization of social science inquiry as research, and organizational reluctance to disseminate information. Many of these arguments and suggestions for their mediation are those outlined by Mott (1996) with her assertions that useable knowledge for the practice of HRD comes from reflective practice.

Mott: Knowledge Comes From Practice. Mott opens her chapter with an acknowledgment of the wide disparity between researchers and practitioners, but argues that "theories are not abstractions generated in a practical vacuum ... [but] are, or should be, born of inquiry and challenges in practice" (1996, p.57). She then maintains that an important concern to HRD professionals should be the establishment of more positive relationship between research and practice, and the encouragement of "less of a distinction between the act of research and the person at the heart of the inquiry" (p.58).

Mott suggests that at the heart of the existing tenuous relationship between research and practice are "our beliefs about the nature and value of science itself, the purpose of research, and even who researchers should be" (1996, p.58). She explains that our view of science is based on the centuries-old positivist paradigm in which knowledge is thought to be an external commodity, a paradigm in which most of us are not taught to be creators of knowledge used in practice, but merely consumers. She further argues that issues of research legitimacy and the rights to knowledge production are really issues of power and control. Citing researchers in various disciplines, Mott submits that most practitioner/scholars have previously been faced with discouragement regarding the pursuit or application of research, or remained part of the problem with their reinforcement of the status quo where knowledge production is concerned. Factors such as changing professional environments, increased demands for accountability, and the shortened "shelf life" of the field's knowledge base, however, are heralding a shift in paradigms. Mott suggests that HRD professionals are now likely to be both researchers and practitioners, and proposes a model of inquiry which she terms reflective theory building.

According to Mott, reflective theory building is based primarily on Schön's concept of reflective practice. Mott reviews earlier work by Argyris and Schön (1974) and Schön (1983, 1988), in particular, Schön's concepts of "*reflection-on-action*, undertaken after the fact, and *reflection-in-action*, spontaneously occurring in the midst of action itself" (Mott,1996, p.60). She then explains what she considers the combination of the two, *reflection-for-action*. When inquiry occurs in this state of *reflection-for-action*, Mott contends that *reflective theory building* begins through

> the thoughtful integration of formal theory, reflection, and practical knowledge and expertise. This, then, is the process of *reflective theory building* in which the reflective practitioner consciously reflects on the challenges of practice, reiteratively engages in problem posing, data gathering, action, evaluation, and reflection, and then shares the knowledge produced with others in practice. (p.60-61)

In her concluding discussion, Mott (1996) reiterates the nature of the problems faced by those who pursue research within practice, speaks to the value of education in applied research methods, and identifies ways in which professionals, as well as students in HRD can be encouraged in reflective theory building. In light of the concerns both she and Chalofsky raise, Mott contends that "resolution lies partly in the continued acceptance of alternative research paradigms and a broadened philosophy of science that values reflective theory building as a complementary and equally constructive path to knowledge production" (p.62).

So, actually, there is little significant disagreement between the positions which Chalofsky and Mott hold. Chalofsky insists, rightly so, that a solid theoretical base will bring the field HRD a greater degree of professional credibility, and even states that "those in the field need to develop the theory and conduct the research that will translate ... into truly professional practice" (1996, p.53). Both stress the need for a knowledge base which is both rigorous and relevant for the profession, a knowledge base which Mott suggests can best be developed through reflective theory building.

Reflective Theory Building in Professional Practice

Reflective theory building in practice is a natural extension of reflective practice as originally posited by Schön (1983, 1988), which of course, is based on an understanding of the term *reflection*. Foundation for the term's meaning can be found in Dewey's early thoughts on the meaning of experience and reflection which he defined as "active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief ... and the further conclusions to which it tends" (1933, p.9). Dewey maintained that practitioners must "draw from the center of their own knowing and act as critics and creators of their world rather than solely respondents to it, or worse, victims of it" (1933, p.78). Drawing on one's own knowing meant being able to reflect, or, according to Dewey, to "look back over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings ... for intelligent dealing with further experiences. It is the heart of intellectual organization and of the disciplined mind" (1938, p.87).

Following Dewey's thinking on experience and reflection, Schön suggested that reflective practice is a process of uncovering unexamined and problematic aspects of daily practice and making them the focus of critical and reflective inquiry. Schön maintained that the goal of reflective practice was the development and articulation of theories-in-use and the ultimate improvement of practice. Rather than falling on either side of the theory vs. practice dichotomy, reflective practice assumes that expertise is comprised of both formal and informal theory and research, tacit knowledge and practical intelligence, and reflection (Mott, 1994), all of which facilitate reflective theory building. Effective action through reflection and the generation of knowledge go hand in hand, with practitioners building an ever-increasing repertoire of professional knowledge which can then be disseminated to others in the profession.

While many scholar/practitioners have considered the nature, scope, and implications of reflective practice, a few provide useful illustrations of how reflective theory buildings occurs. In an early explanation of different modes of reflection, for instance, vanManen (1977) described three modes or levels of reflection which roughly correspond to Schön's concept of reflection-on-action. According to vanManen, the first mode or level of reflection is technical in function, focused on the effectiveness of actions within practice. Reflection at the next level is practical, in which the practitioner questions the contextual appropriateness of choices made. And, the third mode of reflection is described by vanManen as ethical or moral reflection, and deals with the values aspect of action in practice.

Brown and Elfenbein's (1991) work focuses on reflection among action scientists in management arenas. They maintain that our dependence on science has actually encouraged fields to professionalize, but suggest that theories derived from a scientific paradigm no longer apply in today's management climate. According to Brown and Elfenbein, managers are not only removed from the realities of daily decision making and frequently unable to be unable, but "fail to learn the principles of inquiry and knowledge generation as it relates to the process of management" (p.176). Their model stresses practitioners' ability to learn from practice in a contextual and reiterative way and then transfer that understanding into knowledge that is relevant for practice.

Ashbaugh and Kasten (1993), whose work deals most with school administration, concur regarding the need for pre-service preparation and continuing professional education in research methods as means of resolving the disparity between theory and practice. They cite many of the definitions and foundational research that are common to discussions of reflective practice, but add an important dimension which can be drawn upon in the preparation of reflective practitioners. Ashbaugh and Kasten suggest that reflective practitioners differ from others who are less mindful regarding their actions. The four distinctions are: a heightened self-awareness and a sensitivity to "discontinuities between their espoused theories and their theories-in-use"; their ability to "think otherwise ... to imagine different structures, assumptions" (p.162); their ability for critical analysis and reflection-in-action; and, their commitment to lifelong learning and ability to articulate their knowledge to others. Ashbaugh and Kasten maintain that preparation programs which help to promote these four distinctions will foster the development of leaders who are also reflective practitioners.

Like Dewey and Schön, the above scholars argue for a new epistemology of practice and professional preparation, one that assumes a "reflective posture, both grounded in theory and actively engaged in the generation of new knowledge in the context of practice" (Mott, 1996, p.60), one that would contribute to reflective theory building in HRD.

Educating for Reflective Theory Building

In addition to the strategies suggested by the above research, other strategies can be used, especially in HRD graduate programs to facilitate reflective theory building. And while these strategies focus on students, as Chalofsky points out (1996), many students are currently working in the field and opportunities exist to engage other professionals in collaborative research, continuing education programs, and other cooperative endeavors. In addition to the use of discussion groups, internships, and other apprenticeship opportunities, two additional strategies adhere to the scientist-practitioner model as prescribed by Barlow, Hayes, and Nelson (1984), wherein practitioners are encouraged to be discriminating consumers of others' research, rigorous evaluators of their own practice interventions, and researchers who disseminate their own research to their professional communities. The two strategies are forms of authentic assessments through the use of learning portfolios and research colloquia.

Although reflection is a challenging concept to teach, learning journals and portfolios promote reflective thinking in graduate courses as well as serving as useful research tools. Learning portfolios are any mechanism or artifact used to capture one's learning and promote the deliberate and conscious consideration of our thoughts and actions. Learning portfolios can be journals or can take many other forms: notebooks with article or chapter abstracts, newspaper, magazine, or journal clippings; photographs or other media; television or film reviews; original creative work; even bulletin boards, desk pads, or computer logs in which learners capture the focus and process of their reflection (Mott, 1997). Prompted by these writings, documents, or artifacts, the learner can then proceed with reflective inquiry involving "reflective problem setting ... conscious examination ... and the articulating and formalizing" (Mott, 1996, p.60) of one's informal but expert knowledge about a given circumstance or situation in professional practice.

Authentic assessment conducted within the framework of a student research colloquium is another method which encourages reflection. In one graduate adult education program, one in which many learners are professionals from the HRD field, a colloquium is held each spring semester in which the learners present organizational or classroom-based research or other aspects

of their professional practice. The colloquium is preceded by dialogue and writing assignments in which the participants learn to be reflective about not only their learning in general, but also in regard to their chosen topics and the impact upon actual practice (Mott, 1997). Once again, the process of reflection is integrated with formal theory, combined with the participants' practical knowledge and professional expertise, and followed by renewed reflection, all of which are at the heart of reflective theory building in practice.

Conclusion

This paper focused on one of five issues deliberated in *Workplace Learning: Debating Five Critical Questions of Theory and Practice* (Rowden, 1996), that of the role of theory and the source of knowledge in a field striving to professionalize. In two chapters of that text, Chalofsky and Mott (1996) both stressed the need for a solid theoretical base for the field, and Mott outlined how a model of inquiry termed reflective theory building supported reflective practitioners with a vested interest in knowledge production for the field of HRD. In this paper, their chapters were reviewed, the process of reflective theory building was explored further, and suggestions for facilitating knowledge production by reflective practitioners were presented, promoting at least one aspect of further professionalization of the field of HRD.

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Credentialing in the Workplace: Human Resource Development Practitioners Should Strive for Certification

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This paper provides a brief overview of certification terminology, examines the recent growth of certification programs, and explores emerging issues that may offer some compelling reasons for training and human resource development practitioners to pursue certification in the workplace.

We live in a litigious society that demands accountability, integrity, and competence. As consumers, we have come to expect that our physicians, nurses, dentists, dental hygienists, cosmetologists, attorneys, accountants, underwriters and financial planners are competent in their professional practice. Although Wiley (1992a) has acknowledged that the general public is not usually a direct consumer of the human resource manager's services, she has suggested that the public is often affected by policy decisions and recommendations made by human resource professionals. With the increasing complexities of the workplace, highly trained human resource professionals will be required as corporations recognize the strategic importance of their human resources. While licensure, certification and continuing professional education do not guarantee competence, they do establish acceptable standards of practice.

Over the past several years, a number of disciplines have examined professional certification. Specifically, within the past twenty-five years, the fields of purchasing, materials management and logistics have witnessed the continued development and refinement of a variety of professional certification programs (Wilkinson, 1992). The issue of certification has even been contemplated in the marketing field (Parmerlee, 1991). More recently, the computer industry has experienced a growth in certification programs as vendors such as Novell and Microsoft have established certification programs for their customers. In fact, since 1987, 60,000 individuals have passed the CNE (certified Novell engineer) test, and 50,000 have graduated as CNAs (certified Novell administrators) (Filipczak, 1995a). In addition to the certification offered to their customers, Microsoft, Novell and the Educational Testing Service (ETS) have recently attempted to establish a certified technical trainer (CTT) standard (Filipczak, 1995b).

The issue of certification of adult educators, trainers and human resource development (HRD) practitioners has been one that has been examined and debated within the field of adult education periodically over the years (Booth, 1984; Coscarelli, 1984; Galbraith & Gilley, 1985, 1987; Gilley, 1996; James, 1992; White, 1992). It has also been discussed in the context of professionalization (Cervero, 1992; Collins, 1992). The growth of vendor certification programs, professional association sponsored, and university sponsored certificate and certification programs in the last decade (Holt, 1991; Lopos, 1991; Wiley, 1995) coupled with dramatic changes occurring within the business environment offer compelling reasons that merit a re-examination of the issue of certification of human resource professionals. Consequently, this paper will review some terminology and literature on this topic, and examine some of the arguments in support of certification.

Credentialing Terminology

Although several terms associated with credentialing are often used interchangeably, researchers consider them to be distinct (Bratton & Hildebrand, 1980; Galbraith & Gilley, 1985). Professional certification is considered to be "a voluntary process by which a professional association or organization measures the competencies of individual practitioners" (Galbraith & Gilley, 1985, p. 12). Lee (1986), however, has defined certification more generally as the process of publicly attesting that a specified quality has been achieved or exceeded. Certification should also be distinguished from licensure and accreditation. Licensure is a mandatory legal requirement for

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certain professions which offers the public protection from incompetent practitioners. Licensure is similar to certification in that the recipient of either credential is an individual. Alternatively, accreditation is typically awarded to an institution, rather than an individual. Bratton and Hildebrand (1980, p. 22) define accreditation as "the process whereby an agency or association grants public recognition to a school, college, or university, or specialized study program that meets certain predetermined qualifications or standards."

There is also an important distinction between qualification and certification. Qualification refers to "the formal training process, developed using acceptable systematic methods that prepares individuals to assume duties in a specified occupation (Lapp, 1992, p. 5), whereas certification is "the formal (and sometimes informal) evaluation process that determines, validates and attests that individuals meet the technical competencies and skills that are prescribed for performing a specific occupation" (p. 6). Lapp contends that qualification is often the precursor to certification. A final distinction should be made between certificate and certification programs. Holt (1991) acknowledges that the completion of a certificate program means the acquisition of certain proficiencies in concentrated areas of study. Settle (1991) suggests that a certificate is a document with a diploma-like format that is given to participants at the conclusion of a training experience to acknowledge their attendance. Certification programs, in contrast, tend to denote the measurement of competencies. However, a certificate-like document is typically provided to acknowledge certification and the completion of a certification program.

The Growth of Certificate and Certification Programs

Certificate and certification programs are not new inventions (Lopos, 1991). Their growth has been influenced by expansion in areas of employment, by legislation continuously seeking to upgrade professional credentials, by advances in technology, and by the shift toward a global economy. A brief review of some of the recent literature on certificate and certification programs in the human resources field is presented.

Certification in the Human Resource Management Field. Unlike the field of adult education, of which human resource development is considered a subfield by many, the human resource management field has four professional associations which provide certification. These are the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI), the American Compensation Association (ACA), the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans (IFEBP) and the Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP) (Wiley, 1992a, 1995). The two certification designations awarded by the HRCI are the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) and the Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR), and represent the only ones available for the human resource management field in general. The other associations award designations that represent specialized areas of human resources. Since its original inception as the American Society for Personnel Administration Accreditation Institute (AAI) in 1975, the renamed HRCI has certified more than 14,000 HR professionals, and the number of candidates has increased from 150 in 1976 to 595 in 1986 to 2,052 in 1990 to nearly 4,000 in 1993 (Cherrington & Leonard, 1993; Wiley , 1992b). The increasing number of persons sitting for the exams clearly demonstrates a strong interest in certification.

Certification in Training and Human Resource Development. Certification in human resource development and training and development (HRTD) has been pursued on two fronts (Smith, 1994). Professional associations constitute one front, and higher education the other front. Smith further subdivides certification in higher education into two categories: traditional and non-traditional paths. The traditional path includes formal degree programs at multiple levels ranging from the baccalaureate to the doctorate, while the non-traditional path includes continuing education units or proficiency certification which may or may not offer degree credit. Although professional associations have been in the forefront of the certification movement, they have been unsuccessful in their efforts to bring about professional certification. Conversely, higher education has been involved in certification efforts because traditional degree programs have been a major source of voluntary certification for years (Smith, 1994).

Smith's (1994) survey of the 1991 and 1993 American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) Academic Directories identified twenty-four non-degree certificate programs that appeared to specifically focus on human resource/training and development (HRTD). Nineteen of the twenty-four programs were included in Smith's study, and of these, thirteen were identified as certificate programs, three as certification programs, and three were categorized as "other." The annual program enrollment for these programs ranged from five to two hundred participants, and the programs had been in existence from one year to nineteen years. Three of these programs had formal relationships with local ASTD and/or National Society for Performance and Instruction (NSPI) chapters, and many had informal relationships with these organizations. According to Smith, the motivation of program coordinators to offer such programs was to meet a need among practitioners with and without an HRTD background. The motivation among graduates of these programs to attend non-degree certificate programs included their desire to improve their credentials in order to compete more favorably in the job market. Many wanted to obtain work-related competence rather than another degree, and some considered the non-degree programs opportunities to build confidence for future graduate work.

Nondegree Certificate Programs in HRD. Gaudet and Kotrlik (1995) conducted a study which was designed to describe HRD certificate programs currently offered by educational institutions throughout the United States, and to determine the factors that are perceived by HRD certificate program administrators as influencing the development of such programs. Their findings suggest that sixteen primary factors serve as the foundation for the development of HRD certificate programs. The four factors perceived by program administrators as having the most effect on the development of these programs included: changed work environments, career development, certificate programs' clientele, and the quality of the training professional. These findings also suggest that nondegree HRD certificate programs can, and do, play a role in the academic preparation of HRD practitioners (Gaudet & Kotrlik, 1995).

Trends in the Workplace Potentially Influencing Certification

Several trends emerging in the workplace and in academia appear to have the potential to influence the certificate and certification program movement within the field of human resources. Human resources is the umbrella term that has been selected because certificate and certification programs in training and human resource development, and human resource management have been in existence for a number of years (Holt, 1991; Smith, 1994; Wiley, 1992a, 1992b, 1995). However, it should be noted that there is no formal, standardized certification process in the country (Lapides, 1991) associated with training and human resource development like the four previously mentioned professional associations within the human resource management discipline. A standard certification for HRD certificate programs is also nonexistent (Gaudet & Kotrlik, 1995).

The changing nature of the workplace, the proliferation of technology, and the demands of the global economy are forcing many organizations to become increasingly reliant upon knowledge creation and dissemination for sustained competitiveness. Because products and services can be easily replicated and reproduced, it has been argued that the rate at which individuals and organizations learn may become the only source of sustainable competitive advantage (Stata, 1989; Watkins & Marsick, 1993). This increased emphasis on learning at the individual, team and organizational level will impact the skills and competencies required of adult educators, trainers and human resource professionals, particularly in organizations that espouse a learning philosophy. The traditional roles of trainers and human resource management and development practitioners will evolve and new roles which call for a new set of skills and competencies will emerge (McLagan, 1996; Ulrich, Brockbank, Yeung & Lake, 1995; Watkins, 1995). How will human resource professionals prepare for such changes and challenges? Certificate and certification programs appear to offer promising solutions.

A Contingent Workforce. Many scholars have acknowledged that America has entered the age of the contingent or temporary worker, of the consultant and subcontractor, of the just-in-time work force -- fluid, flexible and disposable (Bridges, 1994; Morrow, 1993). The workers of the future will have to constantly sell their skills, and reinvent their relationships with

employers. Although reports vary about the percentages of temporary workers, Bridges (1994) asserts that the figure is actually one hundred percent. He maintains that all jobs in today's economy are temporary, and that we have entered the age of a jobless society. For Bridges, jobs are a "social artifact" (p. 55) on the wane along with the conditions that initially created such work arrangements. The new work arrangements being created are temporary to meet the productivity needs of an organization. Thus, the work arrangement itself is contingent upon the need for what an individual may do, not his or her position. Job security, according to Bridges, resides in the person's employability, vendor-mindedness and resiliency. Handy's (1989) vision of the organization is similar. He acknowledges that less than half the workforce in the industrial world will be holding conventional full-time jobs in organizations by the beginning of the 21st century. He depicts the organizational structure as being similar to a shamrock, a three leafed clover. The first leaf represents the professional core of the organization which will increasingly be comprised of professionals, technicians and managers. These employees are the essential core of the organization. The next leaf is comprised of contractors, and the third leaf is represented by temporary and part-time workers. The concepts of shamrock organization and the jobless society present a clear image of the workplace of the future. Employability will become dependent upon a person's drive to update his or her credentials, acquire new skills and remain knowledgeable about changes occurring in his or her respective field. A commitment to lifelong learning will be the only way to remain competitive in this changing job market. A survey of HRD executives conducted by ASTD (Training & Development, 1994) suggests that self-directed careers will become the norm, and that employees will have to assume more responsibility for their behaviors and learning. It becomes apparent that these trends will impact many in the workforce, but human resource professionals in particular. Not only do many human resource professionals have the challenging task of upgrading the organization's workforce through training and development, they also have the formidable task of upgrading their own skills and abilities to avoid outsourcing.

Outsourcing. Investments in training and workplace education continue to increase which suggest that training is a growing enterprise (Carnevale & Carnevale, 1994). A survey of annual training expenditures by The Lakewood Research Group reported that $52.2 billion had been spent by large organizations for training in 1995 (Training, 1995). This figure represents an estimated 1.59 billion hours of training for 49.6 million people. Additionally, expenditures for outside sources of training increased by 4 percent between 1994 and 1995 to $10.3 billion, which represents 20 percent of total training expenditures. Further, twenty-five percent of organizations indicated that they are increasing their use of outsourcing as a business strategy.

Universal Performance Standards. ASTD's research (Training and Development, 1994) on business trends for learning professionals reveals that HRD executives' perceived universal performance standards will continue to increase. Such standards modeled on the Malcolm Baldridge National Quality Award criteria and ISO 9000 will increase in use and importance. According to Filipczak (1995a), corporate training departments can now be formally certified by an independent agency as meeting certain standards of quality. Organizations can also seek certification for the processes by which they train, and qualify their instructors. Given the endorsement of a set of criteria to be used for certifying the competence and professionalism of training departments by the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance and Instruction (IBSTPI), is it unrealistic to expect that future certification standards could be developed for professional trainers?

Diverse Backgrounds of HR Professionals. According to Kaeter (1995), many trainers and human resource professionals do not have formal education and experience in this field. They did not select HRD as their original occupation (McCullough, 1987), but transferred into the field as subject matter experts with preservice educational backgrounds in occupations outside HRD (Lapides, 1991). Although there has been a significant growth over the last decade in the number of universities that are awarding postgraduate degrees in subjects related to HRD (Kaeter, 1995), a 1993 Training study suggests that fifty-five percent of those trainers surveyed were working as trainers without a college degree (16%) or with a bachelor's degree (39%). Thirty-eight percent of those surveyed held masters degrees, and fewer than 7% have a Ph.D. degree. Nondegree certificate

and certification programs in training and human resource development may offer a cost effective and timely alternative for those practitioners who may be unable or ineligible to pursue courses without a commitment to seek bachelors or masters degrees.

These trends suggest that human resource professionals, like other professional employees, are not immune from changes affecting their livelihood. The growth of nondegree certificate and certification programs in training and human resource development, and professional certification within the human resource management field may be indicative of the perceived need to remain competitive and competent. Certificate and Certification programs may also present a viable option for professional development.

The Arguments For Certification

The arguments against certification are as well documented as the arguments supporting certification (Booth, 1984; Coscarelli, 1984; Galbraith & Gilley, 1985; Gilley, 1987; Gilley & Galbraith, 1986; Gilley, 1996; James, 1992; White, 1992; Wiley, 1995). Opponents of certification contend that certification has several negative implications for the field of adult education and human resource development. They include: the diversity and extensiveness of the field render certification impractical and unattainable for the entire field (James, 1992); the lack of a common body of knowledge, and the difficulty of establishing competence criteria and measurement standards; the potential restriction of the labor supply; the financial and human costs, legal implications and regulatory processes associated with the administration of certification (Galbraith & Gilley, 1985). These issues are not trivial, nor should they be dismissed, however, they should not overshadow the positive implications associated with certification. These negative implications will be refuted, and the positive implications of certification will be discussed in the following section.

Refuting the Arguments Against Certification. The field of adult education and human resource development is fragmented, diverse and interdisciplinary. A common body of knowledge may not exist for the entire field, and therefore, a single, comprehensive certification program representing the interests of all adult educators and human resource developers may not be possible. However, certification may be plausible within certain specific areas of the field, such as training and human resource development.

Lack of a Common Body of Knowledge. ASTD provided a set of competency standards for the field in 1983 and in 1989, and continues to examine the evolving roles of human resource development practitioners. These efforts, while important first steps, are frustrated by lack of a common body of knowledge and by the broad scope of practices associated with the field (Watkins, 1995). Watkins (1990, p. 181) argues that "we need to standardize not our curriculum, but our vision for the field." Given the rapid changes occurring within the workplace, defining competencies for what practitioners are currently doing in the field as opposed to what they might be or ought to be doing may rigidify HRD practice rather than advance it. According to Watkins (1990, p. 181), "It is more important to agree on a common set of values that might characterize ethical practice, on a common understanding of what represents an optimal career ladder for the field, and on the role of HRD graduate programs in professionalizing the field than to standardize it." Certificate and certification programs have the potential to influence the development and professionalization of the field by promoting an integrated vision for the field which embraces a common set of values that characterizes ethical practice. Once a vision is established, a common body of knowledge may emerge. Existing certificate and certification programs may offer a perspective of what professionals in the field perceive to be critical to effective practice given the changes occurring within the workplace.

Restricting the Labor Supply. One of the functions that certification can serve in real-world labor markets is that of restricting the labor supply, or gatekeeping for the field, which is an activity that is perceived to limit the entry of qualified professionals (Galbraith & Gilley, 1986). Gatekeeping may appear to be elitist as it has the potential to cartelize a field by preventing marginal workers from identifying with a particular occupation. However, Hochberger (1993, p. 32) asks "Isn't there *something* we can do to expose the charlatans in our business? "Isn't there

some way to drive these people out of the corporate-training field and to restore some professionalism?" Embracing certification may be one of the answers. It may not expose every charlatan in our field, but it may serve as a differentiating factor in selection decisions.

Administrative and Regulatory Issues. There are numerous administrative and regulatory issues that exist which must be addressed by a credentialing agency offering certification. However, to avoid pursuing the establishment of a certification agency on the basis of these issues would be unfortunate as there are agency models in other professions that could serve as a benchmark. Within the field of training and human resource development, three associations offer workable models that could be used as a guide. They are: the Ontario Society for Training and Development in Canada, the Society for Human Resource Management, and the International Board of Standards for Training, Performance and Instruction (Smith, 1994).

Why Certify? The Positive Implications of Certification. The benefits of certification are examined from three perspectives: the individual seeking certification, the organization, and the field, discipline or profession promoting certification (Wiley, 1995).

The Individual. The benefits include the mastery of a body of knowledge; personal and professional recognition of the attainment of a certification designation; the potential for career advancement and pay incentives; a timely and cost effective approach to professional development; an opportunity to develop a network of professionals with whom ideas, experiences and best practices can be shared, and an avenue to pursue lifelong learning for personal and professional development. In a workplace that will be increasingly reliant upon an individual's development through self directed learning endeavors, certificate and certification programs may become a critical external resource to many practitioners.

The Organization. Certification provides a demonstrated commitment by the employee to personal and professional development. Certification may also assist in the selection process to increase the likelihood of staffing HR functions with qualified professionals. Although more empirical research is needed to assess performance among certified and non certified professionals, preliminary results of a research study found that payback time on certification expenses were typically less than nine months and productivity was higher among certified personnel within the information technology field (Merrill, 1995).

The Field, Discipline or Profession. Certification and the existence of a credentialing agency is one criteria which distinguishes a profession from an occupation (Gilley, 1996). Certification is often viewed as one of the ways in which a field or discipline can be advanced, and one of the ways in which a field can develop and maintain professional and competent practitioners. The development of a common body of knowledge, or an integrated vision for the field which serves as a framework for certification may also provide direction in the design of college and university curriculum. Certification can provide guidance to junior practitioners and can encourage senior practitioners to update their knowledge to remain competitive.

Conclusions

As this paper has illustrated, it appears that certification is alive and well in the human resource management field and its various specializations, and it is alive and well in training and human resource development despite the absence of a formal certification process. The formation and longevity of nondegree training and human resource development certificate and certification programs is indicative of the growing demand for such programs among HRD practitioners. This increasing demand, perhaps fueled by the changes in the workplace and within the HRD field, suggests it might be time for these associations, and university sponsored certificate and certification program administrators to join forces in a collaborative manner to address the issues associated with certification of training and human resource development practitioners for the advancement of the field.

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